THE EYE:

BY OBADIAH OPTIC.

——*VARIOUS OBJECTS FROM THE SENSE,*
VARIOUSLY REPRESENTING. MILTON.

Vol. I.] *THURSDAY, FEBRUARY* 4, 1808. [No. 5.

Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum.

He is a happy man who improves by the miscarriages of others.

THAT man, in all times and in all seasons ought to pursue the line of conduct which has a natural tendency to ensure happiness, is a proposition so evident, that it stands not in need of arguments to prove it; yet in the lives of all men there are times, and in the state of every society seasons when the call comes more imperiously, and the obligation acts with encreasing force.

In such a state are we at present. We are threatened from without with much trouble, distractions are found within, and what is worse than both, vice, with bold and unblushing front, is with hasty strides advancing, and with threatening attitude appears confident, that she will be able to lay prostrate our fair fame, and destroy our simplicity of manners.

It would seem as if our enemies, like *Balak* of old, had enquired of some wizzard how they might subjugate us to their will, and that the answer had been, "*Vitiate their manners.*" Accursed advice, how often hast thou prevailed in the world! how often hast thou degraded man! Thy trophies are thousands of nations in chains, numberless cities in flames, and millions of sacrificed men—and still thou progressest, still thou conductest to inevitable ruin, although surrounded by all the ills that embitter life, yet man will not fly from thy allurements, but receives thee in his arms, yea, embraces thee and goes to rest on thy apparently soft bosom, till a dart strike through his liver, and he falls no more to rise.

Whilst *Rome* retained her native simplicity, she was esteemed through all the world, and her glory rose with a

proud top, which seemed to bid defiance to time; but the riches of the *East* found their way into the republic; expensive entertainments began: Emulation, proud Emulation erected her front: Ambition, ever desirous to excel, stalked abroad; Simplicity of Manners fled from the cities to the deserts and Liberty, with trembling wing, hovered a little longer over them, but at length was forced to fly; a total corruption of manners succeeded; her power was destroyed, her glory lost, and she fell an easy prey before enemies she had long styled barbarians.

But why need I single out an individual people? Exists there a nation in the world, which has not, at one time or other, felt the direful influence of this accursed counsel? Our fathers in *Europe* were virtuous, were free, until their manners were vitiated, then ruin followed. We fled from the contamination of manners, from the chains of slavery, and found an assylum in *America;* in thee O *America*, we found LIBERTY! and in the bosom of thy woods have erected her temple. We have been like the *Israelites* assailed by force and arms, but we proved victorious. Recourse has been had to the famous advice "*Vitiate their manners;*"—and sorrowful to tell, it is vigorously progressing.—But I trust, it shall not prevail. To aid in our ruin, *Europe* has sent us her superfluities, her gew-gaws, her chains, her jewels, her lockets,—her coaches roll through our streets, her gaming tables are found at almost every corner; she has sent us her dancing masters, music masters, her stage players, her fiddlers, her tumblers, her pimps and buffoons, and at last, no doubt to complete the work, she has sent us her MASQUERADERS. She is confident that if our morals were once really destroyed, if the principles of religion were eradicated, if female honour and virtue were no longer our boast, if the love of husbands were removed from their wives to unworthy objects, and the fidelity of wives destroyed, little would be left to conquer, for *nothing so enervates man as vice, nothing so prostrates a love of liberty and independence as luxury.*

Parents, do you love your children?—oppose those vices; suffer them not to approach these *seminaries of ruin;* set them yourselves a laudable example; shew them, that *Americans* are more fond of utility than vanity and vain shew. That the good things of this life were given us to use, not abuse. That the gaming table leads to *ruin;* that expences above our income is nothing but cheating all with whom we are concern-

ed; that a desperate state in our affairs leads to desperate hazzards; teach them that honesty is the best policy, and that a million gained would be but a sorry recompence for the loss of honour, virtue and *independence*. OBADIAH OPTIC.

ORIGINAL.

THE AMERICAN IDLER.—No. V.

Calm and serene you indolently sit. ADDISON.

THE following, which is the *first* letter of my *first* correspondent, is published with pleasure, and I hope that whenever JACK LISTLESS appears in this paper, he will be a welcome guest.

TO THE IDLER.

SIR,

To undertake more than we are capable of accomplishing, is so common in these days, that I doubt not I shall escape without many exclamations of surprise from your readers for my folly, or many interjections of pity, for quitting the sphere nature designed me for.

I am a person composed of such indifferent materials, that I have often wondered for what purpose I was intended, or in what situation I was calculated to succeed. If I possess any good qualities, they are negative ones; if any bad, I trust they are dormant, and may they ever remain so. I rather suspect that I am of that common class of beings, who, as DR. MOORE observes, "pass undisturbed through life, and when they come to their journey's end, are decently interred in the church yard;" who jog along the road of time neither assisting nor assisted by others, neither loved or hated, envied or honoured, and have all remembrance of them, buried with themselves.

But it is time to inform you what was my inducement for addressing you, and what advantage was to result therefrom. You are to know then, that accidentally seeing one of your numbers, I was pleased with it, because the title was descriptive of myself. You call it "*The Idler;*" I sir, am as genuine an idler as could be produced, and to use the words of your immortal predecessor, "do nothing, and thank my stars I have nothing to do!" "*I saw, or fancied I saw*" in you a person like myself, resolutely breaking asunder the bands of indolence, and making an attempt to amuse, instruct, and better mankind. So exemplary did this appear, that to attempt

"*to do likewise*," was the first idea that occurred to me, and I instantly determined to offer myself to you as an assistant or occasional correspondent. You may ask who I am, and what you are to expect from me? From what I have already said, you must be well aware that you cannot hope for "*great things*:" Respecting who I am, you may obtain some information from the following:—I was born within the precincts of this city, with good prospects, and had the greatest opportunities given me to obtain an acquaintance with all branches of knowledge, and every source of literature. In my seventeenth year I was entered as a student in one of the most celebrated colleges on the continent, and left to pursue a course of studies, which might eventually have proved highly beneficial. But study and my disposition seemed incompatible with each other. I joined a set of jolly fellows I found there, who spent the day in planning mischief, and the night in accomplishing it. Our chief delight was, to set the college in an uproar, and worry the tutors: Hence, we frequently made it such a scene of confusion, that it might be said to resemble the "*tower of Babel*," if not by a "*confusion of tongues*," at least by a combination of every villainous sound that could be invented: These pranks, it is true, did not occupy my whole time, but the remainder of it was not given to study. A volume of MRS. RADCLIFFE, or some other novelist, was more congenial to my taste than a volume of the *ancient classics*; and I had much rather dwell on a page of PETER PINDAR, than a problem of BOSSUET. The intricacies of *conic sections*, and the lectures of BLAIR, were sacrificed to some *modern dramatist*; and even the elaborate treatise of *moral philosophy* written by our learned president, had as few attractions as the others; a supper at the tavern, and an occasional game of cards, contributed to fill up the remainder of the time, and thus months and weeks passed away.

But of this life, I at length grew weary, and being also totally difficient in that knowledge I ought by this time to have acquired, I left college without fixing on any profession to engage in, and indeed, when I looked at the difficulties to be surmounted previous to a successful establishment, without a wish to determine on one; for I soon saw (to speak in the language of trade) that the market was overstocked: At every turn of a corner you may see "*Attorney at Law*," on the window shutter, and on almost every other knocker is engraved '*Dr.*" To succeed in either of these avocations, intense study

and application must be added to superiour talents and a polished demeanour. The law had my decided disapprobation after a moment's deliberation; and it was not long before I mentally exclaimed, "*Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it!*" To the drudgery of a compting-house I had no idea of submitting; and the only alternative was to sit down in *total idleness*.

Thus Mr. Idler, I have given you a history of my life, heretofore useless to others, and a blank to myself. If you chuse to accept of such a person for a correspondent, I will endeavour to shake off so much of the "*sin*" of indolence, "*which so easily besets me*," as to attempt a paper for your work. I mean not to set up for a "*censor morum*," to ape the profound philosopher, or rigid moralist; far be it from me to rail at the failings of others, who possess so many of my own. Whatever observations I may make on them, shall be in a good natured way; or if I see them become vices and crimes, I may then perhaps attempt to show them in their proper colours: At any rate, I hope that in my peregrinations through the city, and my wanderings from one circle of acquaintance to another, I shall glean some information, and gather some anecdotes worth your acceptance; and I solemnly promise never to offer any thing that can corrupt the heart, or suffuse the cheek of modesty with a blush. Yours,

JACK LISTLESS.

On this communication it is unnecessary to make many remarks. A moral may (as Jack no doubt intended) be drawn from it, and it is obvious. And I hope (and doubtless my readers with me) that this history of himself, this acknowledgement of his errors, is the fruit of a firm and decisive resolution of reformation; a proof that,

"————Industry has approach'd,
And rous'd him from his miserable sloth:"

and that consequently, the dormant powers of his soul will be awakened to useful, and honourable exertion. J.

ORIGINAL.

THE SPECTACLES.—No. V.

The *sot* a *hero!* POPE.

WHAT news? is the common salutation; some wonder why an embargo is laid; others are astonished it did not

take place sooner; MOREAU is plotting our destruction, some shrewdly cry out; BUONAPARTE is determined we shall no longer remain neutral; and *England* is intent on destroying our commerce, say the papers. All agree we have both external and internal enemies; every one is a politician. The tradesman discusses with facility national affairs, and the common labourer divines the effects of certain measures. Each relies on his own wisdom, and places little confidence in those whose experience and skill have made them rulers of the nation. At every corner of the street we may see groups deliberating on the course which government should pursue; and taverns are converted into chambers of state, wherein our present difficulties are accounted for, and plans laid down, the observance of which would clearly extricate us: There are now many skilful statesmen disguised as scavengers; and WASHINGTONS are drivers of carriages. My honest acquaintance *Ned* is an ale-house politician, whose abilities are rated in proportion to his aversion of taciturnity; he has publicly sworn a thousand times, that he would lose his last drop of blood for his country. *Ned* has been persuaded that great men care too much for their own interest, and pay little regard to the welfare of their constituents, and he indulges his spleen in condemning the principle; indeed, no one can accuse him with a want of sincerity, as I have known him lose many customers to give punctual attendance at meetings of his political brethren. *Ned* belongs to a society where he is a consequential member; he never fails to be present, and he has often told me he has never been marked as an absentee on the roll. If *Ned* has a shoe nearly finished when the hour arrives, he deems it a conflict between patriotism and interest, and leaves it until he has done what he conceives his duty to his country. *Ned* has filled several offices and given general satisfaction, at last he was honoured with the office of president: He now pays more attention to politics; for, says he, the chief member ought to be the best informed in the society, where else can wisdom be expected but in the head? *Ned* whispered to me the other day, that this honour was conferred upon him, because he predicted six months since that an embargo was impending: He now employs the greater part of each day in collecting news, which he details to the society: I used formerly, says he, to make my business my chief attention, but I now see some of it must be as-

crificed. *Ned* may be seen every morning strolling about the coffee-house, and in the afternoon reading the papers in his shop; he is preparing a way for his promotion by florid speeches, and has intimated that he will stand a candidate for the legislature at the ensuing election. *Ned* is regarded as a political luminary, and is applauded while he detects errors in the executive, and ignorance in the judiciary: He has lately made himself eminently conspicuous while he proved in an elaborate oration, that the embargo would improve our domestic manufactures. But *Ned's* fame does him little good, he walks the streets with the clothes he had once thrown away, and contents himself with the hope of meeting some compensation from government. Thus he has gone on until nearly all his customers have left him, and his business so far declined, that his prospects depend upon an uncertainty, which his vanity aspires to—a lucrative office.

As I was closing this number, a communication signed J. E. was handed to me, containing some observations in opposition to my remarks on *novel reading:* It would be incompatible with my original design to notice it in any other way than by saying, that I do not lay claim to exemption from error in any opinions which I advance, but then they are submitted to the judgment of the reader, and not intended as questions for public discussion. It shall always be my care to guard against controversy, and any future attacks will receive no reply. T.

MUSHROOM.—No. III.

SO sir, said he, you have made a fine figure of yourself—you must turn author must you, slamming the door of my small study after him violently. I looked up, it was my friend CAUSTIC. You are in a passion my friend, said I, folding down a leaf of *Tristram Shandy* at the story of *Le Fevre*, which I had just been reading. No, said he, you mistake; but if I was, I should have some reason for it: A man at your age, to enter the lists with young authors, whose ideas are as brilliant as the sun that gilds their morning prospects! you sir, that have seen little more of the world than the gilt Galen's-head over my door, to set up for a reformer of the times—you whose utmost skill consists in breathing a vein,

to set up for a marksman to 'shoot folly as it flies!'—poh!—Fie, fie! Mr. CAUSTIC, don't speak so loud; sit down and let us talk over this matter calmly. No sir, said he, I will not sit down—will you answer me a question or two? Assuredly, a dozen if you please. Well sir, said he (borrowing his language from GOLDSMITH's *Vicar of Wakefield*)—will your conscience let you flatter the great, and hunt down the small?—No.—Then you are not fit for an author. Will you pay more attention to the turn of a period than to the sterling worth of the sense it conveys?—No.—Then you will never gain popularity. Do you expect, that with your irritable temper you can bear with the bites and scratches of a pack of critics, whose mouths are open for you?—No.—Then you are not fit for an author.

Here, fortunately for me, his catechism was ended by his shopman, who had stepped over for him to put up a prescription for a young man who had received a fracture at the *masquerade*—his scull must have been *crack'd* before he went to such a place, said he to his man, smiling, and then turning round to me, he, with his usual severity told me to ponder on what he had been saying, and left the room.

My friend generally speaks the truth, and speaks it home too; but then he does it harshly. I had determined to hear him out calmly, but I could not command myself; my pulse rose from seventy to a hundred pulsations in a minute; and now that he was gone, and I was left in quiet possession of my arm-chair, they gradually decreased to their usual number; and as they decreased, the harshness of old CAUSTIC's manner was forgotten, and I at last was of opinion that he had spoken nothing but the truth. "Flatter the great, and hunt down the small?"—No, never will I so prostitute the talent with which Providence has endowed me—sooner would I 'wrap it in a napkin and hide it in the earth.'

Though the rounds of the ladder of ambition are slippery, and some get falls, from which they never recover, yet many elevate themselves to such a height that their heads become giddy, and they cannot stand *upright*; this however, they do not seem to mind, because they think themselves above observation; but on the contraty, their elevation exposes them to sudden puffs of wind which they would have avoided below, but are now constantly assailed by; the thin disguise which they wore securely below, is blown aside, their deformity is discovered and by the faithful scribe will not pass uncensured.—

But it is an unthankful office, and one difficult to perform, for "Robes and furr'd gowns hide all," hence the truth of my friend CAUSTIC'S remark.

But to the second question, "Will you pay more attention to the turn of a period than to the sterling worth of the sense it conveys?"—Certainly not; if popularity is only to be gained by such means, 'throw it to the dogs, ill none of it;' and yet how often do we find that authors attain fame by dressing vice in the most beautiful garb! how often have we seen (and recently too) poems written in the most elegant language—flowing "softly sweet"—yet conveying to the mind the most lascivious ideas—such authors are the "quag-mires" spoken of in your second number, by "EPHRAIM" (with whom, by the bye, I should like to be better acquainted)—their writings are wills-o-the-wisp that mislead thousands to their ruin—"Whip me such folly round the globe."

As to the lash of criticism which he shook over my shoulders *in terrorum*, that shall not intimidate me—they must take the "will for the deed."

If they attack me on the score of the impurity of my morals, they shall be attended to; but if they unkennel to hunt me down for neglecting to dot an *i*, or cross a *t*, I shall pay no more attention to their barking, than the school boys do to the imbecile threats of old *Deborah*, as they pelt her with snow while she cleans the steps of my door. FUNGUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EYE.

MR. OPTIC,

FROM an English publication, I have taken the liberty of selecting the substance of a short Biographical sketch of the late celebrated monarch CHARLES III, which I have no doubt will be gratifying to some of your readers. B.

DON CARLOS III. king of Spain, was born at Madrid January 20th 1716, and proclaimed king of Spain, September 11, 1759. Shooting was so predominantly his ruling passion that he may justly be said to have been the Nimrod of his time; when the days were short he would indulge in this sport by torch-light. In person he was middle sized, round shouldered, large boned, of a dark complexion, with small eyes and a very prominent Roman nose. His dress was too homely for a prince; he wore commonly a plain cloth stock, leather waistcoat and breeches, boots always of London manufacture, and a large pair of tanned gloves: He usually carried a gun on his shoul-

der, and his servants attended with guns, powder, shot, water, wine, victuals, clothes and his dead game, wolves, hares, rooks, gulls, &c. When he travelled, his driving was like that of *Jehu*, for he drove so furiously that it was no uncommon thing for some of his guards to break a leg, arm or neck, on which his majesty would observe, "he died in his duty."

He rose at seven in the morning, opened his shutters, wrote his letters and dispatches, and then sat out, let it rain or shine, for the chace, or rather shooting. It was his constant maxim, that rain breaks no bones; therefore it never suspended any thing he was engaged in, to the no small mortification of his attendants: His suite on such occasions was generally the infant Don Lewis, the great officer in waiting the Duke de Lozada, the body guards, and three or four coaches and six, with which there was always a surgeon in case of any accident. He returned before noon and dined regularly at eleven o'clock, and always in public, attended by the foreign ministers and those necessary appendages of royalty, his courtiers. He usually ate of six things, drank three times, and was not long at table. After dinner he resumed his favourite sport and seldom returned till dark or later. He then gave audience to his ministers for an hour, afterwards sat with the queen-mother in her apartment, and went to bed between nine and ten—this was the diurnal round of his majesty's life.

In February or March every year he went to the palace of Pardo, in April to Aranjuez, returned in June to Madrid, end of July sat out for San Ildephonso, in October he went to the Escurial, and in November returned to Madrid.

Sometimes, for variety, he would indulge in the sport of fishing, at other times he would have a general battida, which was setting five or six hundred men to drive all the game for several miles round into toils of a great extent, and then the king, Don Lewis, with the whole court, ladies as well as gentlemen, to set out and kill it; at this sport the foreign ambassadors always attended: This diversion was very expensive, and made great havoc among the game.

Many have thought him a very weak prince, with little understanding, but such have been mistaken. He had some parts, was obstinate to the highest degree, and like most other princes, being continually flattered, imagined himself wiser than he really was. He was more reserved than is usual for princes, had no confidant, and communicated his will only by his orders to put it in execution. No opinion or advice could

have induced him to alter his determinations, all must come from himself. Those things to which he applied himself he became a complete master of. He spoke the Italian, French and Spanish languages fluently. He was an exceeding good turner and sometimes practised the trades of taylor and shoemaker; he turned a number of articles of wooden ware; it was his practice to examine minutely into most circumstances: he made with his own hands, every part of a soldier's dress, to judge of the true expence of their uniforms. He told the foreign ministers, one day, that he had made a pair of shoes, "not indeed," said he, "very good shoes, but such as might be walked in."

He ruled with such despotic sway, that he would permit no minister to ague with, or remonstrate to him. In 1760, in opposition to popular sentiment, he removed the Duke of Alva, who had been first minister all the preceding reign. His chastity was such as induced him to banish from Madrid the Dukes of Arcos and Assuna for their amours with actresses and to put an actress concerned into the common prison.

This eccentric prince married (June 19, 1734) Amelia, daughter of Augustus III. king of Poland and Elector of Saxony.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EYE.

MR. OPTIC,

WHILST seated in my pew in —— meeting-house on Sunday morning last, a gentleman, apparently a stranger, came in and seated himself in the next pew—we were singing, and I handed him my book open at the psalm: When service was over he politely returned it to me and retired.—Upon opening it I found written in pencil on one of the blank leaves, the following beautiful lines:— BENEDICT.

May he who owns this little book,
On JESUS fix his eyes,
And view his cross with stedfast look,
Till rais'd above the skies.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

As we conceive *J. E*'s essay would, if published, produce an uninteresting controversy, we are therefore under the necessity of rejecting it; but invite his correspondence in some more useful line.

"*Ellen and Edwin, a tale*,"—under consideration.

"*The Invisible Politician*,"—no subject for 'The Eye.'

Poetical Department.

ORIGINAL.

STANZAS,

Written on hearing of the Outrage on the Chesapeake.

HARK! the sounds of fierce commotion
Rush upon us from afar;
From the shores of foaming ocean
Comes the bloody blast of war.

Hear your slaughter'd brethren crying
Vengeance, from the shades below;
Rise—behold them bleeding, dying—
Hurl your vengeance on the foe.

Lo! your "fathers fam'd in story,"
See, their angry spirits rise,
From the crimson'd fields of glory,
Lightning in their ardent eyes.

Hark! I hear their voices hollow,
Wide the loud alarm proclaim;
Hurry! see, they lead you—follow,
Follow to the field of fame.

Rise ye warriors, rise from slumber,
Fly—your injured country calls;
Dangers threaten without number,—
To the fight—or freedom falls.

Let your country's wrongs inspire you,
Let her glory be your aim;
Let the love of freedom fire you,
To deserve a deathless name.

See—your foes approach with fury;
Drive them back with loss and shame;
Hurry to the combat—hurry—
Hurry to the field of fame.

ANACHARSIS.

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